Are Your Employees Talking About You On Facebook?

Social Media could be the newest form of decreasing social skills. In addition to the general abbreviation and truncation of language, many people find themselves stretching their own ethical, etiquette, and social graces far beyond what they previously have done through phone calls, letters, or even e-mails. Moving past one's better social judgment in Social Media is a growing concern.

It Could be Good or Very, Very Bad

As Facebook reaches **500 million members worldwide**, we're seeing a constant stream of incidents of employees posting inappropriate comments that reflect very poorly on them and their company's reputation. I won't name any names, but there was a recent case in Tennessee where a company official made racist remarks on Facebook that became very public. His defense that "I just posted them on Facebook for my friends" did not prevent him from being fired . . . very quickly.

On the flip side, **it's a good thing if your employees are making positive comments** about your company in Social Media; after all, they can be your best ambassadors and you want them to feel proud to be part of your team.

Social Media Policies

So how do you guide your employees on what to say and what not to say in Social Media? Some companies have added a few paragraphs on social media to their existing HR policies regarding employee propriety and confidential information; while others have developed extensive social media policies to guide their employees. IBM, for example, has published their social media guidelines publicly for anyone to read. It's a great policy for IBM, though rather long.

One thing is certain — CEOs are asking their HR managers to delve into this situation and make recommendations. I was really excited when I came upon the Online Data Base for Social Media put together by Chris Boudreaux. Chris has organized a pretty comprehensive social media policy database and more are being added daily. Among the companies whose social media policies are available on the site are: About.com, the BBC, Dell, Dow Jones, Gartner, Microsoft, the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. Air Force, Wal-Mart and Yahoo.

If your organization is fretting about how your employees are using Social Media, check out some of the policies in the database to find examples that best fit your business.

Whatever you do, don't be lulled into thinking that the impact of Social Media isn't affecting your workforce and your corporate culture. It is and it's often subtle but nonetheless moving in directions you will want to work with and shape to your best benefit.

– Dr. Dan Elkins, President/CEO of Strategic Advantages